

Executive Summary

This first meeting of area residents concerning the development of a water trail system along Raccoon Creek was held in Albany, Ohio at the home of Brett Laverty. The varied interests gathered at this meeting included the Raccoon Creek Watershed Project, Sojourners/Civilian Conservation Corp., area paddlers, and a creek front landowner. Group consensus was to move forward with efforts to build a water trail partnership and plan for Raccoon Creek. The next meeting was scheduled for Jan 12, 2006 at the Albany public library.

Attendees

Suzanne Fisher	Sojourners/CCC	serenityriver@hotmail.com
Gary Kellough	Sojourners/CCC	gwk_chill_out@hotmail.com
Ben McCament	Raccoon Creek Partners	mccament@ohiou.edu
Fred Bush	Sojourners/CCC	fred4corner_stone@yahoo.com
Larry Williams	Raccoon Creek landowner	irielion@juno.com
Jeff Fite	Sojourners/CCC	jfite@sojournerscare.net
Molly Gurien	local freestyle paddler	gurien@ohio.edu
Brett Laverty	Raccoon Creek Partners	brettlaverty@hotmail.com

Why are we here?

We began the meeting by allowing participants to voice their opinions, interests, or reasons for wanting to develop a water trail plan for Raccoon Creek.

- Community economic development
- Increase area paddling opportunities
- Lack of public access along the creek
- A way to protect and preserve Raccoon Creek
- Opportunities for young adults to improve local community
- Fondness for Raccoon Creek

Vision Development

What is your vision for developing water trails along Raccoon creek?

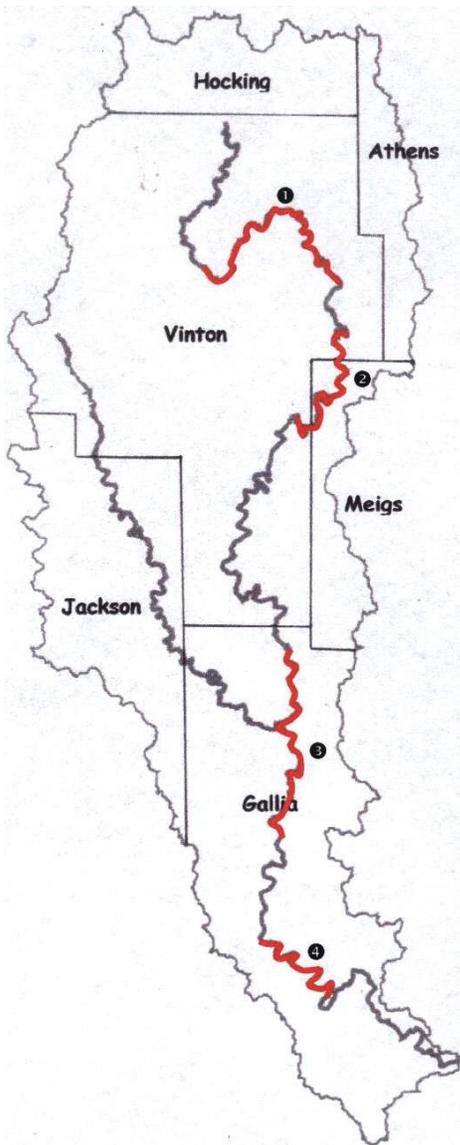
- The obvious benefits to local communities would be increased tourism, support of local businesses, and an incentive for revitalizing depressed local economies. Water trails are not the answer but part of the solution. There were concerns that tourism and development could damage or begin to degrade the natural beauty of Raccoon Creek. There was a discussion on limiting tourism or in other terms developing a balance between preserving Raccoon Creek and economic development. Raccoon Creek...keep it natural!
- [additional thought] A water trails program could be used to work with creek front landowners to establish riparian buffers to protect stream banks, create more wildlife habitat, and preserve that natural beauty. Landowners must overcome the myth that trees along a stream and woody debris in the stream creates a nuisance or is the cause of flooding.
- Group consensus was to pursue a name for the organization such as Raccoon Creek Water Trails. Some more humorous ones include (PORC) Paddlers on Raccoon Creek, (FORC) Floaters on Raccoon Creek, and (TORC) Trails on Raccoon Creek...just food for thought.
- [additional thought] Imagine dozens of miles of public access along Raccoon Creek. The warm spring rains have come and the creek is just right to get you over the wood debris. Your family and friends are gathered together in several canoes and kayaks for a two-day float trip. You float several miles the first day stopping frequently to fish, swim, and admire the spring wildflowers. You stop that night at a designated camp site created by a supportive creek side landowner. Around a blazing campfire and under a clear star-filled night, you give thanks for a wonderful life.

Partnership Development

- Group consensus was to limit the partnership until a vision and structure for the water trails organization can be established.
- Future partnerships may include Vinton County travel and tourism, Vinton County commissioners, Zaleski State Forest, Lake Hope State Park, National Park Service, ODNR Division of Watercraft, Bob Evans Farm, Gallia County Parks, and Gallia County Commissioners. Please think of other individuals and/or organizations that could help our cause.
- Group discussed level of commitment and skills that each of us can offer the project. Sojourners/CCC is heavily committed and can provide up to 10 students, 30-40 hours each month, leadership skills, grant writing experience, and construction consultation. Raccoon Creek watershed project is heavily committed and can provide a full time coordinator, leadership skills, grant writing experience, and knowledge of the creek. Molly Gurien and Larry Williams will act in an advisory capacity to support grant writing and partnership development.

Water Trail Development

There was considerable discussion on designating numerous sections of Raccoon Creek as segments of a larger water trail system. These segments include:



❶ **Zaleski to Knox** – this 16-mile section in northern Vinton County is almost exclusively within Zaleski State Forest and is one of the most remote and scenic sections in the entire watershed. It provides fast water sections in the spring and slow/deep sections in late summer and fall. Many opportunities exist to get out of the boat and hike to scenic overlooks. Historic markers include Moonville Tunnel, B&O Railway, and lookout rock.

❷ **Bolin Mills (SR 50) to Eakins Mill Bridge** – this 12 mile section in Vinton/Meigs County is very remote and scenic with very little development. Water quality along this section is excellent, which could provide excellent fishing opportunities. This section is good in the spring and more challenging (log jams) during late summer and fall. The land along this section is entirely owned by private landowners. Larry Williams and Kim White are Raccoon Creek supporters and have land along this section...could be key to working with local residents. Historical markers include the covered bridge at Arbaugh.

❸ **Ewington to Bob Evans Farm (Rio Grande)** – this roughly 15 mile section in northern Gallia County has deep pools for good year around paddling although strainers are common. There are two boats ramps along this section at the Village of Vinton and Bob Evans Farm. The scenery drifts back and forth between cattle farms and stream side forests. Water quality is excellent along this section...lots of birds, turtles, and other wildlife. Historical markers include Village of Vinton, Tycoon Lake/wildlife area, Daniel Boone's cave, and Bob Evans Farm.

❹ **Raccoon County Park to Blessing Road** – A good portion of this 7-mile section is bordered by the Gallia County park system. They offer great opportunities for camping, hiking, or a day picnic. Good water quality along this section although cattle farms and a denuded riparian forest are common. Historical markers include the county park, Daniel Boone's rock.

Assignments

- Research other water trail programs around the country. Generate ideas on what is working and what is not. How are they organized? What strategies do they use when working with landowners? How are they dealing with liability issues? What funding strategies are they using to support their efforts? What kind of boat launches are they using? Do they provide any inspiring stories or testimonials? What about water trail maps, signage, or brochures? Be prepared to discuss your findings at the next meeting.
- Please be thinking about a name for our organization and a vision/mission statement. The Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network suggests the following:

Develop a vision statement that describes the desired future condition of the water trail and how the group wants to proceed...create a mission statement that defines the role of your group in reaching your vision for the water trail.

- Molly Gurien agreed to reserve the Albany Public library for the next meeting in January.
- Brett Lavery and Ben McCament will research and review the requirements for the ODNR Division of Watercraft's Public Boating Facility grant. We will see if a DOW representative is available to attend our next meeting.
- Ben McMament will check with Ohio University/ILGARD about reserving space on the Raccoon Creek Website (www.raccooncreek.org) for the water trails project.

Next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday January 12, 2006 at the Albany public library at 7:00. Bring an appetizer to share??